



Office *of the* Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

### **Investigative Summary**

#### **Whistleblower Allegations and Complaints of Reprisal from Office of Disability Adjudication and Review Employees**

We investigated complaints of reprisal from several employees in a Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of Disability Adjudication and Review Hearing Office who claimed that agency managers retaliated against them after they disclosed misconduct of hearing office employees, including that management officials had engaged in hiring irregularities, and time and attendance fraud. The whistleblower allegations also included sexual harassment, and sexist and racist written comments that resulted in hearing decisions reflecting a systemic bias motivated by animus towards protected groups.

We determined:

- Hiring decisions were largely unchecked, leaving the management official free to populate the office with friends and family members of current employees, increasing perceptions of favoritism and diminishing both employee morale and focus on the agency's public service mission.
- Hiring practices, which often included the manipulation of vacancy announcements to achieve a desired end, likely violated merit system principles resulting in prohibited personnel practices.
- No appointments violated Title 5 veterans' preferences, though one stated end was to avoid hiring veterans.
- Management officials' time and attendance practices violated both law and regulation, and set a tone for the office that misconduct by certain employees would be tolerated, and in some instances, encouraged.
- The presence of racist and sexist written comments in hearing notes was known to many employees and managers in the office for years and went unaddressed; however, we did not find evidence of any systemic biases in written decisions involving protected groups.

The Office of the Special Counsel (OSC) has an open investigation related to these allegations; we sent our report to OSC for legal determinations related to reprisal and prohibited personnel practices.

Prosecution was declined. We sent our report to SSA officials for their determination of appropriate administrative actions.

**NOTE: Reports of Investigation contain sensitive confidential information  
and are not publicly available.**